



The Civic served as host for the touring National AIDS Quilt in the 1980s.

Civic Auditorium

The Civic at 75

Santa Cruz turns out
to celebrate its central
gathering place

By Wallace Baine

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Santa Cruz does not have a town hall, or a town square, at least not in name. But the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium has played those roles and many others in the city's history - from sports arena, to concert hall, to ice-skating rink.

On Saturday afternoon, the Civic celebrates its 75th anniversary with speakers, performers, historical exhibits and a forum for you and your neighbors to tell stories about the Civic.

The auditorium, a product of the New Deal era Works Progress Administration, opened March 28, 1940, attracting 5,000 visitors to see what was then a state-of-the-art facility. Since that day, the Civic, built for \$275,000, has served every civic purpose imaginable. It's been used to debate contentious city issues, to memorialize lost citizens, to graduate students, even to administer to those in need as a Red Cross shelter. It's hosted A Gay Evening in May, and served as the home for the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, and the Santa Cruz Symphony. Santa Cruz's holy trinity of popular music - Jerry Garcia, Bob Marley and Bob Dylan - have all played the Civic stage. Also appearing have been the Dalai Lama, Coretta Scott King, Gloria Steinem, Ralph Nader and many other national and international notables.

On Saturday, Civic officials may learn of even more uses of the building when they initiate a kind of oral history project. The Santa Cruz-based Impact Productions - the video production company that created the "We Are Santa Cruz" display in the window of the downtown Rittenhouse Building - will be on hand to help tell the Civic story a little more fully.

"We will have some of the side rooms open," said Civic supervisor Andrea Botsford, "and Eric Thiermann and his crew will recording people's memories of what happened at the Civic over the years."

Among the myriad of historical time lines that the Civic offers is a neat encapsulation of women's history in Santa Cruz, as it went from hosting an address by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt in the Civic's early years, to being

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the venue for the popular Santa Cruz Derby Girls in recent years. Of course, in between, the Civic was the site of the Miss California pageant, perhaps the most contentious event in the social history of women in Santa Cruz County.

The Derby Girls - and their junior unit, the Derby Grooms - will be just one of several community organizations that will be on hand to celebrate the Civic's 75th. Others include the Kuumbwa Jazz Center Honors Band, Dancenter, the Innerlight Choir and cast members and performers from Santa Cruz Follies. The Great Morgani will also be there to add

that Santa Cruz flavor to the festivities.

The outdoors Church Street Fair will feature beer and wine tasting from 4 to 5:30 p.m.

Civic officials said that

they will add the various filmed comments of citizens remembering Civic events to the time capsule first encased in the building's cornerstone in 1939.

CIVIC'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY

When: 1:30 to 6 p.m.

Where: Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium, 307 Church St., Santa Cruz

Tickets: Free

Details: www.facebook.com/santacruzcivic